

Research Based Student Improvement:

Does research support curriculum alignment and is CSCOE a valid tool to accomplish the process?

Patricia Startz

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Abstract: This action research project determined whether or not the implementation of an aligned curriculum is a research based approach to school improvement and to determine a candidate for the technology enhanced curriculum alignment tool package suitable for deployment in a small rural K-12 public school district. The project follows the writer/researcher through the process, from research through the initial training and deployment of the CSCOE package, a technology enhanced, research based curriculum alignment tool.

EDLD 5398: Patricia Startz SID: L20052259 Internship for Principal

Introduction / Background (Section One)

Falls City ISD is a small rural school located in South Central Texas. Our student population is typically less than 365 students. As documented in the Texas Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) which may be accessed at this URL, <http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/perfreport/aeis/> using the district's county code, 128904 or the individual campus codes 128904001 (High School) and 128904101 (Elementary), about 97% of the student population is white. There is a growing number of Hispanic and African American families; however, their numbers are so small that AEIS reports generally have *'s in place of percentages on most disaggregated reports. The free and reduced lunch count is about 21%, earning the district a 50% E-Rate telecommunications discount. The district's network servers and switches, and amount of available bandwidth have been a problem when considering outside classroom resources for day-to-day use. Another consideration is the type of internet access, computers, phones, and pad devices teachers and students have available after hours to access materials for classroom preparation and homework.

FCISD administrators, teachers, parents and students have the expectation that the majority of the student body will perform at exemplary levels on state assessments; the district has maintained that performance level for about five years. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) has redesigned state assessment instruments; they are now called STAAR assessments. Teachers wanted to begin preparing and adjusting their curriculum to prepare students to be successful as soon as they heard about the new assessment instrument, but TEA was very secretive about the new format only saying that knowledge and skills will be assessed to greater degrees of depth and breadth. In order to begin preparations, teachers participated in an online professional

EDLD 5398: Patricia Startz SID: L20052259 Internship for Principal

development program in August 2011, but were not confident that was enough. Each year, teachers in almost every grade level complain of learning gaps, i.e. material that should have been covered in previous coursework, but was not.

After providing professional development during Fall 2011 in-service, administrators deemed it necessary for students to undergo the first round of STAAR assessments in order to utilize the data to determine their next course of action. The raw data is now in: The data for the 2012 9th grade subset of the district's K-12 population was analyzed and summarized in the findings tables. The subjects reviewed included Algebra I, Biology, English I Reading, English I Writing, and World Geography. There were a total of 25 students in this group, of these 25 students, 10 demonstrated advanced performances in Algebra I, 5 demonstrated advanced performances in World Geography, 4 demonstrated advanced performances in English I Reading, only 1 demonstrated advanced performance in Biology, and no student demonstrated advanced performance in English I Writing. The two English courses indicate the most need of improvement with three areas in which the average performance was below 51%. Biology was slightly better with three areas of performance below 60%. English is one of the courses in which teachers have voiced concerns about the learning gaps. The data seems to suggest there is reason for concern where English, World Geography, and Biology are concerned.

During the interim, the leadership team considered the next course of action. They each had heard of CSCOPE in previous administrative meetings and in various meetings throughout the last few years. The questions to be answered were:

EDLD 5398: Patricia Startz SID: L20052259 Internship for Principal

Is curriculum alignment necessary for STAAR success and is CSCOPE a viable research based tool/tool set to achieve both alignment and STAAR assessment success?

Initially, administrators and teachers will benefit from the research to determine research based answers to the stated questions, but it should be noted that students will be the ultimate benefactors. At the moment, teachers want to teach students what they need to know to be successful STAAR testers; they are not really sure how to achieve that, but the spring assessments definitely indicated that the issue of learning gaps must be addressed. CSCOPE is a research based collection of curriculum lessons for all core courses aligned to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). It builds spiraling content coverage into the appropriate timelines to ensure students have been exposed to the appropriate content with samples of exemplar lessons. Each course provides an annual timeline, unit plans, individual lessons, and lesson extensions for diverse student populations. One can utilize the database to compare course/grade level requirements enabling teachers to meet their course requirements with technology infused lessons that will close learning gaps. This study should provide further documentation that proper curriculum alignment will increase the depth and breadth of student learning increasing their level of cognitive knowledge while improving their performance on the STAAR assessment.

Literature Review (Section Two)

The accumulation of the above information, articles in favor of curriculum alignment, and what I read about CSCOPE indicated that, with whole-hearted effort of the implementing staff, it could provide the guidelines and/or resources teachers need to fill the learning gaps while teaching students to think about material in the way that the new and future assessments are likely to be written. In the long run, this will prepare students to think in more analytical terms

EDLD 5398: Patricia Startz SID: L20052259 Internship for Principal

at deeper and broader levels of understanding than previously demanded of them, better preparing them for their future careers. In searching for the answers to the Action Research questions, several articles were reviewed and will be discussed in this section of the report.

Many of the same teachers have been employed by this district for over twenty years. Each time the state ratchets up student performance standards, these teachers have successfully met the challenge of morphing their current teaching methods and content knowledge to train themselves to provide students with the knowledge and skills they need to meet exemplary classroom, campus, and district standards. As demonstrated with the data above, student performance was not horrible on the Spring 2012 STAAR assessments, but it is not Exemplary and it is indicative that learning gaps exist. Michael Fullan's 2002 article, "**The Change**", bolsters the idea held by many educators that:

Only principals who are equipped to handle a complex, rapidly changing environment can implement the reforms that lead to sustained improvement in student achievement.(16). His article further details several core strategies in leading successful change. They include: *nested learning communities, principal institutes, leadership for instruction, peer learning, and individual coaching.*(16) In the principal's support of my research and her suggestion that one or two other lead teachers also research the issue of CSCOPE as a solution to closing achievement gaps, the principal demonstrated the use of a nested learning community. Both the superintendent and the principal attend *Team of Eight* training and their respective training institutes. Both have further supported the training of myself and another teacher to lead our peers in this process and provide individual coaching. It is these last couple of processes that lead to getting very involved in the process of change through helping peers who do not necessarily want to change. Fullan warns that: *...the first 6 months or so of implementation will be bumpy,*

EDLD 5398: Patricia Startz SID: L20052259 Internship for Principal

but advises that doubters sometimes have important points that should be addressed. He further points out ...*that changing what people in the organization value and how they work together to accomplish it---leads to deep, lasting change.* (18) This change must be bolstered by building relationships, sharing the creation of knowledge, and the creation of a systemic understanding of the process. Now that the district is in fully involved in the deployment of the curriculum alignment process utilizing CSCOPE, there are definite signs of stress, and some rebellion against the process. A reread of this article gave a new appreciation of Fullan's instructions to address the concerns of the *naysayers*... in an effort to do that, this researcher has held several informal discussions with lead teachers on both the elementary and high school campuses in an effort to pinpoint the specific causes of concern so that future, meaningful professional development can be customized to fit individual teacher needs within prior to the end of the first six weeks of instruction. The plan is to arrange for 1:1 training for those who seem to be struggling the most on each campus.

The Educational Research Service published the article, "Ensuring What is Tested is Taught: Curriculum Coherence and Alignment," as part of its 2003 ***The Informed Educator Series***. This article explains curriculum coherence and alignment while it addresses the benefits and challenges school administrators can expect during the process. A common complaint among teachers within our district is that of learning gaps more than likely caused by the lack of a coherent attempt to align curriculum. This article quotes (Smith, Smith, and Bryk 1998, 29):

Students who pass through these unaligned and incoherent instructional programs may "experience delays, repetitions, and/or skips in core knowledge and skills in ways that seriously diminish their chances for success in school and, in particular, on the tests used to measure their knowledge and their progress".(11)

EDLD 5398: Patricia Startz SID: L20052259 Internship for Principal

This profound statement begs yet another question... Why does aligning curriculum seem to improve student performance? The article had a ready answer for that question as well, provided within a reference to a 2001 article by authors Newmann, Smith, Allensworth, and Bryk...

Compared to disconnected short-term experiences, integrated experiences, sustained long enough for successful completion, provide greater clarity about what is required for mastery, and how prior knowledge can be applied to future questions...(15).

The authors of this article quote Liebling's 1997 work (16) as they strongly encourage school leaders to ensure Curriculum Coherence, i.e., "policies, strategies, and content across subject areas and grade levels are consistent and aligned, reflect standards, and result in students, teachers, and parents positively perceiving the rationale, scope and sequence of educational experiences.", 2. They provide several pages of detailed research and cite twenty-four well-known educational experts to support their arguments which can be summarized simply as, "one element has been identified as key to successful improvement efforts: alignment of what is tested with what is taught."(1)

The literary review process uncovered a December 2005 unpublished literary review written by David A. Squires for Edvantia. His summary paragraph succinctly defines Curriculum alignment and its research basis; as such it is worth quoting verbatim.

Curriculum alignment includes alignment between and among several education variables, including state standards, state-mandated assessments, resources such as textbooks, content of instruction, and instructional strategies. The studies reported in this review provide strong evidence from scientifically based research that aligning the various components can have positive significant effects.(5)

After reading these two articles, the question of whether or not curriculum alignment is a key factor to improving student performance on statewide assessments was answered with a definitive **YES**. It was then time to focus on either developing or adopting a “canned” systemic method to achieve curriculum alignment within our K-12 rural public school district. The articles referenced above spoke of school districts devoting countless hours developing and aligning their own curriculum, a quite intense, costly, and huge process. Educators across the state of Texas read these articles when they were originally published, realized the mammoth task that was being recommended, and believed in the expertise of the authors enough to request and invest in help from their regional service centers in developing curriculum aligned to the then current state assessment, TAKS. As a result, regional service center curriculum specialists, district level content experts, and teachers have worked for nearly a decade to develop an alignment tool that not only provides a coherent scope and sequence, but also provides busy teachers with sample units, sample exemplary lesson plans, and even sample assessments written in the same format as the state assessment instrument: this tool package was given the name CSCOPE.

This package has been mentioned in different meetings at the service center for several years, but no one in our district had the opportunity to try it, nor did district financial resources stretch to cover its direct and indirect costs. Both of those facts changed at about the same time in early 2012. The benefits of the Year at a Glance tool in determining the differences in student expectations for a particular science topic over several grade levels was demonstrated in ten minutes or less. This demonstrated its capabilities as a tool for curriculum alignment. The article, “CSCOPE: Targeted success with quality curriculum...A Guaranteed and Viable

EDLD 5398: Patricia Startz SID: L20052259 Internship for Principal

Curriculum: Taking a Closer Look,” published in 2008 by TESCCC takes the reader through a summary of Robert Marzano’s 2003 research about student and school performance. TESCCC quotes Marzano’s finding, “that a guaranteed and viable curriculum is the most powerful school-level factor in determining overall student achievement. The article further states, “Districts and schools must ensure that the intended curriculum (in Texas, The Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) and district curriculum) is implemented consistently by all teachers. In turn, the attained curriculum—what students actually learn—should align with the intended and implemented curricula. (2).” Those statements further reinforce the necessity of adoption of a research based curriculum alignment tool throughout the district as a means to improve student performance. The remainder of the article explains how CSCAPE accomplishes both vertical and horizontal alignment of curricula with the Year- at-a-glance document, unit plans, lesson plans, exemplar lesson samples, manipulative templates, and sample assessments. These curricula tools, in combination with the latest interface upgrades, up-to-date curriculum re-aligned to new STAAR assessment, and a reasonable price tag made it impossible not to recommend deployment for the 2012-2013 school year.

To review its qualifications: it meets teacher requests for STAAR aligned instructional supplements; applies the process of curriculum alignment to student performance- the solution most recommended by educational researchers for at least the last decade; is supported by not only our regional service center, but by all but one Regional Service Center in the state with ongoing professional development; and is a cost effective package.

Further research by lead teacher, Cathy Stolle, has revealed the existence of pre-created resource packages for purchase by individual or groups of teachers or campuses. If funds are available for such purchases, the amount of work required to begin implementing the curriculum

EDLD 5398: Patricia Startz SID: L20052259 Internship for Principal

alignment process with all the recommended manipulatives is further simplified and may be just the impetus that some reluctant teachers need to fully embrace the process. The process will not be easy; it is still going to take a mammoth amount of work for teachers to create their own unique version of a K-12 STAAR aligned curriculum, but if it accomplishes nothing else, it provides definite timelines and proven spirals of content delivery even the most resistant teachers can utilize to mold their content delivery processes and favorite lessons into the package necessary for continued STAAR success at the advanced performance level. The process has gotten them actively and positively discussing curriculum between grades and classrooms for the first time in years.

According to the TESCCC article about the adoption of CSCOPE, “The biggest impact of CSCOPE will be in the ongoing curriculum and instruction discussions around vertical alignment, instructional focus, lesson planning and pedagogy.”(14) This researcher agrees with that statement. In the months since the possible deployment of CSCOPE was first mentioned, our teachers have had more productive, solution oriented discussions about curriculum than witnessed since the adoption of the TAKS assessment. They have moved beyond complaining about each other’s teaching practices to working together to provide a systemic alignment of our K-12 curriculum to the latest state standards in a concerted effort to close the learning gaps for all FCISD students. That is quite an accomplishment and a critical necessary piece of the process of school improvement.

According to Jay McTighe and Ronald S. Thomas’s February 2003 article published in the journal *Educational Leadership*, Backward Design for Forward Action,

EDLD 5398: Patricia Startz SID: L20052259 Internship for Principal

Looking back to the key concepts and essential questions that underlie content standards can help identify learning goals and provide the starting point for planning both curriculum and school improvement.(52)

Their recommended process can be summarized in three steps:

- *Determine learning goals*
- *Collect, analyze, and summarize evidence from multiple sources...*
- *Consider the root causes of present achievement and then—and only then—implement systemic actions to address root causes, promote enduring learning, and increase test scores.(55)*

In keeping with the authors' recommendations, FCISD administrators decided to implement the use of the CSCAPE package, "A Guaranteed and Viable curriculum." The next step was to work backward from spring testing dates to develop a training and implementation timeline with district administrators, teachers, and region service center staff. Training occurred prior to and during August in-service. Teachers have had a couple of weeks to work with the scope and sequence of the CSCAPE curriculum and attempt to create their own unique version to meet their students' instructional needs. Some teachers are reaching overload; it is time to consider ways to help them and keep them on track. In accordance with Ronald Thomas's suggestion in his October 2006 article, "How to Survive Data Overload," as it appeared in the *Educational Leadership* journal, it might be a good time to provide a reflection instrument for teachers to refresh their commitment to the task at hand. The opportunity to reflect about CSCAPE curriculum, student strengths, student weaknesses, reasons for achievement successes and failures, and readily available CSCAPE tools for intervention should help clarify CSCAPE's usefulness. If it proves not to be the best tool to meet their own classroom goals and their

EDLD 5398: Patricia Startz SID: L20052259 Internship for Principal

campus and district student achievement and performance goals it should at least give them the opportunity to dig into their own content repositories to develop custom lessons they believe will provide the best opportunities for their students to experience the learning process in their classrooms.

It was in contemplating this idea, that the presentation, *Aligning Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment to Standards*, put together by Anne Tweed of the MCREL institute in 2007 was discovered. Her presentation provided a “How-To” for aligning course content to Standards. Her statements, “ Standards are statements that define what all students need to know, understand and be able to do...Curriculum is used to refer to lessons as well as courses or whole-year frameworks in a subject. *Shifting Gears*, p.23...while Instruction illustrates how to effectively teach what students should know and be able to do,” that corroborated the fact that the district is on the right track with its adoption of CSCOPE. The district is has a majority of veteran teachers with proven track records, but some of them were heard to frequently comment that their lesson had been working for years and they saw no reason to change. They had lost site of the fact that they are bound by their contracts to teach the standards adopted for their assignment. There is no negotiation, choosing not to do so is not really an option, i.e. when the standards change, so must curriculum content and instruction. Old resources must be refreshed, re-ordered or even put away. CSCOPE provides teachers a way to become productive immediately. Our district is not requiring the use the exemplar lessons, teachers are being allowed to utilize their own resources and customize the process, as long as they:

- *Identify and communicate the content considered essential for all students;*
- *Ensure the essential content can be addressed in the amount of time available for instruction;*

EDLD 5398: Patricia Startz SID: L20052259 Internship for Principal

- *Sequence and organize the essential content in such a way that students have ample opportunity to learn;*
- *Ensure that teachers address the essential content;*
- *Protect the instructional time that is available*

By definition, that means teachers are being required to provide a guaranteed and viable curriculum equivalent or better than that provided in CSCOPE within the timelines provided within unit and yearly guidelines to ensure content is taught to the degree dictated by the time the STAAR assessments occur annually. If teachers veer too much from CSCOPE guidelines and their students do not perform well on the assessment, the documentation of their processes will be in their lesson plans and serve as an assessment tool for the principal.

Finally, the 2007 power point presentation entitled, ***Professional Development Planning: Matching Trainings to Teacher and Student Learning Needs***, provided food for thought upon embarking to prepare our staff to implement the CSCOPE tool. It instructs readers to be sure that, “Improved student learning is the objective of professional development; and Professional development powerful enough to significantly restructure established procedures and instruction...”(2) is employed throughout this process. Furthermore, it instructs that the principal, “models the attitude that learning is ongoing in the effort to be better and there is always something more to learn.”(3) After careful consideration of the process of the CSCOPE implementation, it is the opinion of this researcher that the associated professional development met these requirements. While communication about the curriculum alignment process is ongoing, it is obvious that it will take perseverance to grow this process into continuing communication about student, teacher and school improvement. It is this researcher’s hope that

EDLD 5398: Patricia Startz SID: L20052259 Internship for Principal

the current collaborative climate can be utilized to establish an active learning community that engages in and shares action research for sustained school improvement in our school.

It is this researcher's belief that this article review answered the question of whether or not aligned curriculum is necessary to improve student performance on state assessments, most importantly on the STAAR. It provided the opportunity to collect a sampling of data to justify the curriculum alignment process is needed. Finally, the literary review process lead to the understanding that CSCAPE is a package that provides all the tools necessary to provide a technology enhanced research based curriculum alignment package, and provided guidelines for the implementation process and professional development planning to meet the needs of our teachers as they begin the process of a district wide K-12 curriculum alignment.

Action Research Design (Section Three)

Subjects

The subjects are the K-12 teachers of FCISD and ultimately their students. Year 1 STAAR data is available (if I can get permission to use it) for the 2012 9th graders.

Procedures

This research project started by asking the question: what kinds of questioning can be utilized with interactive student response systems to help teachers ask higher level questions. The principal did not support that project, and as I studied the situation, I realized that although it would be helpful for a small group of teachers to experiment with fun technologically infused lessons, there was a systemic issue that needed to be quickly addressed. Through teacher comments, it became apparent that many upper level teachers are concerned that learning gaps in previous courses will negatively impact their ability to help students meet the new standards as set forth by TEA with mastery assessments known as STAAR. Our teachers are accustomed to utilizing benchmark assessments to fill learning gaps; however, they are unsure how to address some of the cognitive skill sets being assessed by the new assessment instruments. There are no benchmark instruments available (previous released tests). I reviewed articles and books about vocabulary, questioning, using interactive response systems, etc. then, while working with a group of teachers from other schools, I was introduced to CSCAPE and had the opportunity to see for myself how easy it was to look at a topic to determine what should be taught about it at every grade level. Not only did the tool include alignment information, it included technology infused exemplary lessons with extensions for diverse classrooms.

I asked my superintendent and principal if they had considered CSCAPE as a means of closing the educational gaps of which many teachers complained. They told me to contact the region center and other educators I might know to get more information about what it is and

EDLD 5398: Patricia Startz SID: L20052259 Internship for Principal

what it can help our teachers do. This researcher discussed the CSCOPE tool with several principals at a Regional Curriculum Advisory meeting in April 2012. The general consensus was that it was a valuable tool they considered vital in preparing their teachers and students for success on upcoming STAAR assessments. The administration wanted to wait until they got scores for the first round of tests; after that, they advised me to proceed. I and an elementary teacher who holds her administrative curriculum design master's degree as well as her principal's certification have worked together to coordinate training, and district wide deployment of CSCOPE. We aided teacher training, and have been available to help teachers upon request. Additional 1:1 sessions are being planned as soon as focus areas are determined. The initial timeline for the 1:1 training was early October; however, after discussing the status of the deployment and realizing several elementary teachers are very overwhelmed, we decided bringing that 1:1 to teachers earlier may improve their understanding of the process and alleviate some of their frustration. It is possible the use of a reflection document might provide the opportunity for teachers to clarify the processes in which they are involved and reinforce the gains in student achievement that will result. Having received permission of the original author, Ronald Thomas, I plan to utilize the reflection guides he provided in his 2006 article, "How to Survive Data Overload", to develop some quick online surveys that are easy for teachers to utilize as part of their curriculum discussions and even integrate into their lesson development processes.

As learned in the literary review, it is critical to develop and maintain communication, especially with the "naysayers." Their concerns do seem valid and will be discussed in the Findings section.

Patricia Startz: EDLD 5397:8052
Action Research Plan –Draft Rev. 6.

Goal: To show how interactive student response systems can be utilized to more fully develop student higher order cognitive skills.

Action Steps(s):	Person(s) Responsible:	Timeline: Start/End	Needed Resources	Evaluation
<p>Posted on wiki: https://pastartz.wikispaces.com/EDLD+5397-Internship+for+Supervision</p> <p>I cannot locate an Embedded assignment log for this course at this point, but will keep looking.</p>		June 1, 2011 – August 2011	Internet – Educational Research Reporting sites Vendor materials.	Literature reviews for articles and books with noteworthy information, quotes, and examples in a useable format.
Project Terminated:				

The principal preferred that I seek a different Action Research Project. It took a while to determine exactly how to meet the requirements for the course and serve the teachers on my campus in the best way possible without inconveniencing anyone or disrupting the regular flow of instruction in progress. Some of the pieces of my plan were included in the regular preparedness activities conducted by elementary teachers, i.e. meeting with parents, discussing student expectations, the purpose of homework packets, and the provision of tutorials for students in need of extra help. Teachers, administrators, and parents were concerned about results for the first round of STAAR assessments.

As a result, I focused my attention on assisting the testing coordinator with the processes of online assessment registration and administration; analyzing AEIS results for the previous year in the process of updating district and Campus improvement plans; and attempting to figure out what sort of action research activity could work at all. In the middle of these processes, I learned that teachers were increasingly concerned about curriculum gaps from grade to grade and course to course. I began to research the importance of curriculum alignment to student assessment success and search for a technology and research based tool to help teachers achieve systemic curriculum alignment. At about the same time, I was exposed to the curriculum alignment tool, CSCOE. It is a tool previously considered, by our administrators, but not utilized due to bandwidth issues, with those issues removed, it seemed to be a viable option.

Goal: To discover the importance of curriculum alignment to student success; a research based technology tool for systemic curriculum alignment; and develop a training plan for implementing systemic research based curriculum alignment to prepare teachers to better prepare all of their students for mastery of new curriculum standards.				
Action Steps(s):	Person(s) Responsible:	Timeline: Start/End	Needed Resources	Evaluation
Literature and assessment results Reviews	Researcher	August 2011- September 2012.	Internet- Educational Research reporting sites, vendor materials	Curriculum alignment and curriculum alignment tool articles
Analyze viability of network to support externally based curriculum alignment tools, online assessments, professional development, etc.	Researcher	August 2011 – September 2012	Network bandwidth, equipment, personal computer requirements.	Current status of network.
Recommendations for corrective measures to utilize outside resources	Researcher	October 2011 - September 2012	Requirements, failure documentation, suggested corrective measures	Current status, corrective measures taken.
Question Lamar peers, regional service center staff, and other administrators/teachers about technology and researched based curriculum alignment tools in use.	Researcher	February 2012 – May 2012	Internet, email, face-to-face informal q&a, and access to products within a product. Administrator buy-in. \$Funds for purchasing program access and providing staff development.	Samples of associated documents and/or notes. Administrator decision to proceed with a product. Product purchase agreement.
Devise professional development plan	Researcher, district administrators, elementary campus lead teacher.	June 2012 – August 2012	Trainer and trainee availability; \$Funds for purchasing program access; sufficient bandwidth and computer capacity to support program use by all staff.	Training Schedule: Funds Approval/Invoices Staff approved for training during summer;
Implement training/support	Researcher, region service center staff, elementary campus lead teacher	July 27, 2012 – May 2013	Trainer and trainee availability; sufficient bandwidth and computer capacity to support program use by all staff;	Training and use expectations; Training evaluations Training appointments

Goal: To discover the importance of curriculum alignment to student success; a research based technology tool for systemic curriculum alignment; and develop a training plan for implementing systemic research based curriculum alignment to prepare teachers to better prepare all of their students for mastery of new curriculum standards.				
Action Steps(s):	Person(s) Responsible:	Timeline: Start/End	Needed Resources	Evaluation
			In-Service and during year training time allotments.	met, rescheduled, cancelled and not made up;
Program results	Researcher, region service center staff, elementary campus lead teacher	June – August 2013	Training logs; teacher use logs; Student scores on STAAR assessments overall course scores	Teacher program evaluations; Student performance results; Principal evaluations
Project Action Research Summary: 1) Literacy Review Summary 2) Descriptions of research process; 3) Outcome of network analysis and corresponding action taken in support of project; 4) Professional Development outline; 5) Summary report of training implementation procedures, teacher evaluations available at the end of the project timeline as it corresponds to my coursework.	Researcher	August 2011 – Sept. 2012	All of the above resources.	Research report. Teacher evaluations of professional development; Where baseline EOC data exists from previous year, Share the report on Edblog, with teachers, with principal.

Format based on Tool 7.1 from *Examining What We Do to Improve Our Schools* (Harris, Edmonson, and Combs, 2010)

EDLD 5398: Patricia Startz SID: L20052259 Internship for Principal

In order to create the shared vision, I relayed teachers concerns about curriculum gaps creating critical assessment deficiencies; commented that the research that I was reading indicated research based curriculum alignment tools could mend the gaps; reminded administrators that the bandwidth situation should be resolved by June 2012 and the school(s) revenue situation was improving enough to allow for repairs to network infrastructure that should enable fluent use of external internet based resources; finally I informed them that my experience with CSCOPE had been very positive, if somewhat limited and suggested we all research its capabilities further. They each did their own questioning, as did I at a regional curriculum meeting and the region 3 educational service center. The joint conclusion was that CSCOPE is a viable research based tool to help teachers better align their curriculum to TEA curriculum standards for each K-12 course. As a result, information about CSCOPE was given to teachers and offered as a means to address their curriculum alignment concerns, in addition to providing them a curriculum development resource with abundant exemplary lessons from which to create their new personally customized STAAR aligned curriculum. While some teachers expressed reservations, they each felt like it was a positive effort to meet new curriculum standards without waiting for a succession of poor assessment results to dictate local and possible state corrective measures be taken. Teachers have been assured that the tool is just that, a resource from which to create their new curriculum, they are still in charge of their own classrooms and their own curriculum. We all share the vision of “Learning for all whatever it takes!”; CSCOPE, the research based curriculum alignment tool is seen a resource with which teachers can ensure and document the provision of curriculum that meets TEA curriculum standards at every grade level K-12. In order to promote community (teacher) involvement, district administrators have paid for initial training and offered a compensation day for those that

EDLD 5398: Patricia Startz SID: L20052259 Internship for Principal

attend training voluntarily prior to August in-service to a conflict in the regional service center's staff schedules.

When it comes to resource management and mobilizing community resources, my role will be to insure that the internet, network, and network computers are functioning at peak levels so that network connectivity cannot be blamed for poor program performance and cited as a reason teachers might choose not to use the resource during the school year. It also includes the role of District/Campus CSCOPE administrator. I have to make sure the annual budget allows for the inclusion of the CSCOPE program, CSCOPE training, time allotted for teacher planning, network and computer repairs, as well as network training for new network software for me and one assistant. In order to better implement CSCOPE and support its use, I am working with the 3rd grade teacher and certified curriculum specialist Cathy Stolle, to become very fluent in the nuances of the program CSCOPE in order to provide exemplary support as teachers implement its resources and procedures into their daily instructional patterns. I will need to schedule additional Region 3 face-to-face support in addition to personal face-to-face support on an as needed basis throughout the school year and possibly beyond.

Initial conclusions indicate that systemic curriculum alignment is one way to improve student performance including formal statewide assessments and that CSCOPE is a viable, research based and proven tool for providing K-12 teachers with curriculum and practice assessments aligned to STAAR assessments. Our teachers want to help our students master new TEA curriculum standards and enable them to successfully demonstrate that mastery via the latest statewide assessment tool, STAAR. In order to continue the districts' Exemplary Performance record without missing a beat, the majority of teachers were in favor of

EDLD 5398: Patricia Startz SID: L20052259 Internship for Principal

implementing CSCOPE; it is therefore, an extension of the district's positive performance based culture.

I will ask the superintendent if they can be asked to mention the impact of CSCOPE training and resources to their teaching practice as part of their evaluation documentation and we will collect and compare the 2013 EOC results for the 9th graders of 2012 and 2013 to see if valid conclusions about performance can be drawn.... I am still determining how to do this as no final conclusions or results are readily available at this point.

As the research project comes to its conclusion, my results will be disseminated to our local community, our regional service center, posted on my blog, and possibly posted with other classmates' research projects on a Lamar Action Research Site. It is my hope that my research will provide enough evidence that CSCOPE is a valid research based tool to support curriculum alignment as a means to improve student performance on formal statewide assessments to convince my local teachers to stick with it and other districts, in need of systemic improvement the information they need to convince them to try it. In order to do that, it is necessary to provide professional development in copious quantities. See the professional growth plan for teachers on the next page.

CSCOPE Implementation Professional Growth Plan				
Action Step(s)	Person(s) Responsible	Timeline:	Needed Resources	Evaluation
Provide Instructional Leader Initial CSCOPE Introductory Training	Researcher Superintendent	July 27, 2012	Transportation Personal computers Willing Staff Members Training session at R20 and their training staff	Attendance Log; Training evaluations
Provide District & Campus Administrators Initial Administration CSCOPE training	Researcher Superintendent Principal	August 6, 2012	Transportation Personal computers Willing Staff Members Training Staff at R3	Attendance Log Training Evaluations
Provide teachers introductory CSCOPE training prior to start of school so they can better utilize it to prepare for first weeks of school	Researcher Superintendent Principal	August 15, 2012	Peak performing Network and network computers for teacher instruction; Teacher handouts, i.e. TEKS, CSCOPE brief history & uses, instructions, notebooks for CSCOPE resources;	Expectations survey Training Evaluation
Provide teachers hands-on curriculum development via CSCOPE training	Researcher Superintendent Principal	Aug. 21, 2012 Aug. 22, 2012 Timeline to be determined as needed.	CSCOPE training literature, peak performing network infrastructure and workstations in the labs (for instruction) and in classrooms for teacher use after instruction.	Expectations survey; Training evaluation; Right fit survey. Availability for 1:1 training in September, October, and February, March of 2012-2013 school year.

Keywords and phrases:

Curriculum alignment, CSCOPE, technology tools for curriculum alignment....

Data Collection

I utilized information from informal interviews with administrators from other schools, student test results, i.e. AEIS reports from prior years and raw results from the 2012 freshman class EOC STAAR assessment administration. The raw results were collected into tables and calculations performed to determine % right for each student, for each objective and the average % correct for each group for the objective. The margin between standards of performance was noted as well as the objective with best and worst performance objectives.

EDLD 5398: Patricia Startz SID: L20052259 Internship for Principal

Findings (Section Four)

The STAAR EOC results for 2012 9th graders, verified the need for improvement in instruction for this group of students. See the table below and on the next four pages.

Table 1. Spring 2012 9th Grade Algebra STAAR EOC Results- Raw Data

Alg1										
FR	PAF	LF	LEI	QONF	Total	SSS	MS	SP	AP	
7/8	1	13/15	1	7/9	49/54	4810	1	1	1	
1	3/4	3/5	9/10	8/9	43/54	4392	1	1	1	
5/8	3/4	11/15	3/5	2/3	37/54	4121	1	1	0	
1/2	5/12	8/15	1/2	1/3	25/54	3686	1	1	0	
3/4	2/3	3/5	4/5	2/3	37/54	4121	1	1	0	
3/4	3/4	11/15	9/10	2/3	41/54	4293	1	1	0	
7/8	2/3	11/15	7/10	7/9	20/27	4248	1	1	0	
3/4	7/12	11/15	3/10	2/3	11/18	3969	1	1	0	
1/2	3/4	11/15	1/2	8/9	37/54	4121	1	1	0	
7/8	3/4	11/15	7/10	4/9	19/27	4162	1	1	0	
1	1	4/5	1	1	17/18	5056	1	1	1	
5/8	7/12	2/3	4/5	7/9	37/54	4121	1	1	0	
3/4	3/4	4/5	9/10	1	5/6	4505	1	1	1	
1	11/12	13/15	4/5	7/9	47/54	4639	1	1	1	
5/8	1/4	2/5	1/10	4/9	19/54	3467	1	0	0	
3/4	2/3	1	9/10	7/9	5/6	4505	1	1	1	
7/8	3/4	13/15	3/5	7/9	7/9	4333	1	1	1	
7/8	2/3	3/5	4/5	5/9	37/54	4121	1	1	0	
7/8	7/12	2/3	1	1	43/54	4392	1	1	1	
3/8	5/12	4/15	3/10	2/3	7/18	3542	1	1	0	
7/8	3/4	14/15	3/5	2/9	19/27	4162	1	1	0	
5/8	2/3	2/3	3/5	4/9	11/18	3969	1	1	0	
1/2	1/3	8/15	1/5	4/9	11/27	3579	1	1	0	
1	1	1	9/10	7/9	17/18	5056	1	1	1	
7/8	3/4	11/15	9/10	7/9	43/54	4392	1	1	1	
13/17	46/67	47/66	9/13	31/45	53/75	4230	12/25	1	24/25	2/5
76.50%	68.67%	71.20%	69.20%	68.89%	70.67%			100.00%	96.00%	40.00%
40% Of class Advanced Performers.										
Advanced Performers			10		Avg=	4608	275	Above Adv.Perf.baseline		
Satisfactory Performers			14		Avg =	3747	2/3	585	1/3	Below Adv.Perf.baseline
Met Min., but not Satisfactory			1							
Best Performance Area -			Functional Relationships							
2nd Best Performance Area			Linear Functions							
Middle Performance			Linear Equations and Equalities							
Next to Worst Performance Area			Quadratic Functions							
Worst Performance Area			Properties and Attributes of functions							

EDLD 5398: Patricia Startz SID: L20052259 Internship for Principal

Table 2: Spring 2012 9th Grade Biology STAAR EOC Results- Raw Data

Biology										
CSF	MG	BEC	BPS	IES	Tot	SSS	MS	SP	AP	
9/11	8/11	1	6/11	9/11	7/9	4376	1	1	0	
7/11	10/11	1/2	5/11	6/11	11/18	4000	1	1	0	
8/11	4/11	3/5	3/11	7/11	14/27	3801	1	1	0	
6/11	7/11	7/10	5/11	7/11	16/27	3949	1	1	0	
3/11	6/11	2/5	5/11	4/11	11/27	3579	1	1	0	
5/11	4/11	3/5	7/11	9/11	31/54	3912	1	1	0	
6/11	9/11	4/5	3/11	8/11	17/27	4026	1	1	0	
5/11	6/11	7/10	5/11	6/11	29/54	3838	1	1	0	
8/11	9/11	4/5	6/11	1	7/9	4376	1	1	0	
6/11	9/11	3/5	9/11	8/11	19/27	4189	1	1	0	
10/11	10/11	1	7/11	10/11	47/54	4686	1	1	1	
8/11	7/11	1	8/11	10/11	43/54	4429	1	1	0	
5/11	5/11	4/5	8/11	9/11	35/54	4065	1	1	0	
9/11	8/11	3/5	7/11	8/11	19/27	4189	1	1	0	
4/11	3/11	1/2	6/11	3/11	7/18	3541	1	1	0	
7/11	7/11	4/5	6/11	6/11	17/27	4026	1	1	0	
6/11	5/11	4/5	5/11	9/11	11/18	4000	1	1	0	
7/11	4/11	1	6/11	9/11	2/3	4105	1	1	0	
6/11	5/11	4/5	7/11	7/11	11/18	4000	1	1	0	
6/11	5/11	1/2	4/11	6/11	13/27	3728	1	1	0	
5/11	7/11	7/10	8/11	10/11	37/54	4147	1	1	0	
4/11	5/11	1/2	6/11	8/11	14/27	3801	1	1	0	
5/11	6/11	1/2	5/11	4/11	25/54	3691	1	1	0	
10/11	9/11	9/10	6/11	9/11	43/54	4429	1	1	0	
9/11	8/11	7/10	8/11	9/11	41/54	4326	1	1	0	
34/57	32/53	47/66	28/51	37/53	29/46	4048	9/25	1	1	0
58.75%	59.87%	70.05%	54.92%	69.34%	62.45%	4048	9/25	1	1	0
Advanced Performers -			1							
Satisfactory Performers -			24		Avg=	4048	9/25	528	Below Adv.	
Best Performance Area -			Biological Evolution and Classification							
2nd Best Performance Area-			Interdependence within Environmental Systems							
Next to Worst Perf.area			Mechanisms of Genetics							
Worst Performance Area			Cell Structure and Function							

EDLD 5398: Patricia Startz SID: L20052259 Internship for Principal

Table 3. Spring 2012 9th Grade English I Reading STAAR EOC Results- Raw Data

Eng1Rdg	UAAG / sarss	UAAG / sarps	TSAS	UAAG-mc	UALT	UAIT	TMCS	TRS	SSS	MS	SP	AP
2/3	1/3	1/2	5/8	7/8	11/14	15/19	39/56	2072	1	1	0	
1/3	1/3	1/3	5/8	13/16	6/7	15/19	9/14	2000	1	1	0	
2/3	1/3	1/2	3/4	11/16	6/7	29/38	19/28	2047	1	1	0	
1/3	1/3	1/3	1	3/4	1	17/19	5/7	2097	1	1	0	
1/3	1/3	1/3	3/4	11/16	4/7	25/38	31/56	1900	1	1	0	
0/9	1/3	1/6	3/4	7/8	13/14	33/38	9/14	2000	1	1	0	
1/3	1/3	1/3	3/4	1	13/14	35/38	41/56	2124	1	1	0	
0/9	0/9	0/18	3/4	13/16	9/14	14/19	1/2	1843	1	0	0	
2/3	2/3	2/3	7/8	15/16	13/14	35/38	47/56	2353	1	1	1	
2/3	2/3	2/3	1	7/8	1	18/19	6/7	2412	1	1	1	
1/3	2/3	1/2	7/8	15/16	13/14	35/38	11/14	2220	1	1	0	
1/3	1/3	1/3	1	15/16	1	37/38	43/56	2185	1	1	0	
0/9	1/3	1/6	1	7/8	13/14	35/38	19/28	2047	1	1	0	
2/3	2/3	2/3	3/4	7/8	1	17/19	23/28	2304	1	1	1	
0/9	0/9	0/18	1/2	9/16	1/7	15/38	15/56	1588	0	0	0	
2/3	2/3	2/3	7/8	7/8	5/7	31/38	43/56	2185	1	1	0	
2/3	2/3	2/3	1	5/8	11/14	29/38	41/56	2124	1	1	0	
1/3	1/3	1/3	7/8	13/16	11/14	31/38	37/56	2024	1	1	0	
2/3	2/3	2/3	7/8	7/8	13/14	17/19	23/28	2304	1	1	1	
1/3	1/3	1/3	3/4	11/16	4/7	25/38	31/56	1900	1	1	0	
0/9	1/3	1/6	7/8	7/8	6/7	33/38	9/14	2000	1	1	0	
0/9	1/3	1/6	3/4	15/16	5/7	31/38	17/28	1950	1	1	0	
2/3	2/3	2/3	5/8	11/16	1	15/19	3/4	2154	1	1	0	
1/3	2/3	1/2	1	7/8	6/7	17/19	43/56	2185	1	1	0	
2/3	0/9	1/3	1	7/8	13/14	35/38	41/56	2124	1	1	0	
29/57	31/66	10/23	33/40	33/40	19/23	52/63	42/61	2085 17/25	24/25	23/25	4/25	
50.88%	46.97%	43.48%	82.50%	82.50%	82.57%	82.53%	68.86%		96.00%	92.00%	16.00%	
Advanced Performers -					4		Average	2343 1/4				
Satisfactory Performers -					19		Average	2070 8/19		233 11/19	Below Advanced	
Met Minimum, but not Satisfactory -					1							
Did not meet Minimum					1							
Best Performance Area -				Analysis of text MC								
2nd Best Performance area-				Short Answer analysis					* Short Answer Analysis and Ratings Need major			
Next to Worst Performance area-				Short Answer ratings					improvement.			
Worst Performance area-				Overall Short Answer Average								

EDLD 5398: Patricia Startz SID: L20052259 Internship for Principal

Table 4. Spring 2012 9th Grade English I Writing STAAR EOC Results- Raw Data

Eng1Wrtg										
litcmp	expcomp	totcmp	revsn	editing	tmcscr	totwrtgscr	sss	ms	sp	ap
3/4	3/4	3/4	1	14/15	29/30	53/62	2278	1	1	0
3/4	3/4	3/4	14/15	14/15	14/15	26/31	2239	1	1	0
1	3/4	7/8	2/3	13/15	23/30	51/62	2201	1	1	0
5/8	3/8	1/2	1	2/3	5/6	41/62	1899	1	1	0
5/8	1/2	9/16	8/15	11/15	19/30	37/62	1802	1	0	0
3/4	5/8	11/16	4/5	13/15	5/6	47/62	2067	1	1	0
3/4	3/4	3/4	13/15	13/15	13/15	25/31	2166	1	1	0
5/8	3/8	1/2	4/5	11/15	23/30	39/62	1849	1	0	0
3/4	5/8	11/16	14/15	13/15	9/10	49/62	2131	1	1	0
5/8	3/4	11/16	4/5	13/15	5/6	47/62	2067	1	1	0
3/4	3/4	3/4	13/15	13/15	13/15	25/31	2166	1	1	0
7/8	7/8	7/8	13/15	14/15	9/10	55/62	2365	1	1	0
3/4	7/8	13/16	14/15	4/5	13/15	26/31	2239	1	1	0
7/8	7/8	7/8	14/15	11/15	5/6	53/62	2278	1	1	0
1/2	1/4	3/8	1/3	8/15	13/30	25/62	1563	0	0	0
1/2	1/2	1/2	2/3	2/3	2/3	18/31	1779	0	0	0
3/4	5/8	11/16	11/15	1	13/15	24/31	2099	1	1	0
3/4	7/8	13/16	4/5	14/15	13/15	26/31	2239	1	1	0
3/4	7/8	13/16	14/15	4/5	13/15	26/31	2239	1	1	0
1/2	3/4	5/8	2/5	11/15	17/30	37/62	1802	1	0	0
5/8	1/2	9/16	14/15	13/15	9/10	45/62	2000	1	1	0
3/4	1/2	5/8	11/15	2/5	17/30	37/62	1802	1	0	0
3/4	3/4	3/4	4/5	3/5	7/10	45/62	2000	1	1	0
7/8	3/4	13/16	13/15	14/15	9/10	53/62	2278	1	1	0
7/8	3/4	13/16	11/15	13/15	4/5	25/31	2166	1	1	0
29/40	65/97	30/43	31/39	4/5	59/74	44/59	2068 14/25	23/25	19/25	0
72%	67%	70%	79%	79%	79%	74%		92%	75%	0%
Did not Meet Minimum Score -				2						
Met minimum score, but not Satisfactory -				4						
Satisfactory Performance -				19	Average Score =			2164 1/19	289 1/19	Ab.Bs.
Advanced Performance				0					311 18/19	Bel.Ad.Prfl
Tied for Best performance area				Revision and editing						
2nd best performance area				Literary Composition						
Worst performance area				Expository Composition						

EDLD 5398: Patricia Startz SID: L20052259 Internship for Principal

Table 5. Spring 2012 9th Grade World Geography STAAR EOC Results- Raw Data

WGeo								
HGC	GEO	CLTR	ECSTS	TOT	SSS	MS	SP	AP
6/7	23/26	11/14	11/14	57/68	4404	1	1	1
5/7	21/26	4/7	4/7	47/68	4000	1	1	0
1/2	15/26	1/2	1/2	9/17	3660	1	1	0
13/14	23/26	4/7	5/7	27/34	4266	1	1	0
3/7	15/26	3/14	9/14	33/68	3573	1	1	0
4/7	10/13	3/7	4/7	21/34	3839	1	1	0
11/14	8/13	4/7	11/14	23/34	3967	1	1	0
6/7	9/13	5/7	6/7	13/17	4183	1	1	0
6/7	12/13	11/14	11/14	29/34	4464	1	1	1
13/14	25/26	4/7	11/14	57/68	4404	1	1	1
6/7	11/13	1/2	11/14	13/17	4183	1	1	0
11/14	21/26	5/7	1	14/17	4359	1	1	0
1	23/26	6/7	13/14	31/34	4741	1	1	1
5/7	21/26	11/14	6/7	27/34	4266	1	1	0
3/7	9/26	1/7	2/7	21/68	3203	0	0	0
1/2	10/13	9/14	5/7	23/34	3967	1	1	0
5/7	11/13	9/14	9/14	25/34	4106	1	1	0
1	25/26	13/14	6/7	16/17	4949	1	1	1
1/2	23/26	2/7	9/14	43/68	3870	1	1	0
1/2	19/26	3/7	5/7	21/34	3839	1	1	0
11/14	23/26	4/7	13/14	55/68	4311	1	1	0
4/7	21/26	9/14	11/14	49/68	4070	1	1	0
11/14	8/13	1/2	13/14	47/68	4000	1	1	0
11/14	11/13	5/7	6/7	55/68	4311	1	1	0
11/14	23/26	4/7	5/7	13/17	4183	1	1	0
45/62	51/65	41/70	44/59	34/47	4124 18/25	24/25	24/25	1/5
72%	78%	58%	74%	72%		96%	96%	17%
HGC=History Government & Citizenship						Next to worst performance area		
GEO=Geography						Best Performance area		
CLTR=Culture						Worst performance area		
ECSTS=Economics, Science, Technology, & Society						2nd Best performance area		
Advanced performance = 5				Highest score-4949		Average Sco 4592 2/5		
Satisfactory Performance = 19				Avg=		4050 3/19 353 16/19 Bel.Adv.Perf.		
Minimum Score not met = 1 (Special Ed Student)						Average score 72%		

EDLD 5398: Patricia Startz SID: L20052259 Internship for Principal

The data in the previous tables clearly shows room for improvement in teaching and learning. The literature review tells us that curriculum alignment is the most recommended method of improving student achievement and accomplishing sustained school wide improvement. Furthermore, the literature review has provided verification that CSCOPE is a viable research based curriculum alignment tool that has been used successfully by many schools to improve student performance on formal statewide assessments. My informal interviews, which were not recorded, are very supportive of the process of curriculum alignment utilizing the research based technology enhanced curriculum alignment tool, CSCOPE. Ongoing discussions with lead teachers on both campuses is uncovering the current causes of stress related to the district wide implementation of the tool. The elementary campus teachers, misinterpreted implementation instructions to mean they had to stick to exact duplication of each CSCOPE lesson. Teachers on both campuses are dissatisfied with the levels of learning presentation and outcomes of the initial lessons. Their concern: sacrificing content that has led to current advanced levels of performance within each subject in order to fill gaps. As I continue my 3 year professional development plan, this project will be further monitored.

Conclusions and Recommendations (Section Five)

This is a work in process... There is no final conclusion about the success or failure of this project; however, the knowledge is certain now that curriculum alignment is viewed by many stellar educational professionals as the most critical element in sustained school improvement. Also certain is the fact that the technology based and enhanced curriculum alignment tool, CSCAPE, and the processes it guides teachers to undertake creates a, “Guaranteed and Viable Curriculum,” with documentable evidence that individual instructors have/have not taught their students to state required standards within the time guidelines required to ensure student success on statewide assessments as defined by the Texas Education Agency. This data, may well be the evidence the administrators will need to justify retaining a teacher, the creation of a professional growth plan for a teacher, or even for the termination of a teacher. The result is a system that provides data about both student and teacher performance that will be useable for setting future improvement and training goals.

The administrators I spoke with in April recommended not mandating teachers teach each lesson according to the provided “recipe lesson”. Our administration is heeding that advice allowing teachers to customize their curriculum “favorites” in combination with new ideas to create their own unique curriculum to present in accordance with the strongly recommended timelines and spirals provided for each course. Our professional staff can draw from both the new CSCAPE resources and existing resources while adhering to the timelines built into CSCAPE to create curriculum that in their professional judgment, best meets the needs of their students and their requirement to teach today’s modern standards.

As ongoing discussions with teachers continue it is becoming obvious that professional development sessions need to focus on how to integrate CSCAPE curriculum timelines,

EDLD 5398: Patricia Startz SID: L20052259 Internship for Principal

manipulatives, and best practice methodologies into teaching practices that have proven to yield learning at the previously exemplary levels of state assessment standards. It will be up to teachers to merge the best of their lessons and practices with those provided in the CSCOPE package to produce a district wide vertically and horizontally aligned K-12 curriculum that not only meets TEA's new STAAR minimum standards, but goes two steps farther to produce student performance at the advanced level of performance. Teacher comments about the lessons during the first two weeks of instruction lead this researcher to doubt that strict adherence to CSCOPE lessons will yield advanced levels of learning demonstrated with advanced performance level scores on STAAR assessment instruments.

Although this researcher would like to see documentable improvement in English I and II student performance this year, the knowledge gained in the literary review and first hand observations indicate the CSCOPE implementation task will be frustrating for most teachers for most of this first year. It is probable that all of their hard work is not likely to yield immediate improvements in performance for most of their students. It is acceptable to expect there should be small gains each year and the process should get easier and more fluid for teachers as they become more experienced. By the end of the three year observation period, the data to support positive gains should be available. The evidence of the success of many schools across the state suggests this will be the case. My part in making sure that happens will be to provide high quality prompt support and professional development to address the issues that are causing teachers to be stressed about any piece of the district wide K-12 curriculum alignment process being undertaken utilizing the technology enhanced curriculum alignment tool CSCOPE.

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EDLD 5398: Patricia Startz SID: L20052259 Internship for Principal

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